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To: Judiciary and Human Services Committee

From: Kathy Barron, Executive Director for The Network Against Domestic Abuse

Date: March 15, 2010

RE: Raised Bill 5497: An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Speaker of the House of Representatives' Task Force on Domestic Violence

Good morning, Senator McDonald, Senator Doyle, Representative Walker, Representative Lawlor and members of the Human Services and Judiciary Committees. My name is Kathy Barron and I am the Executive Director for The Network Against Domestic Abuse which services the towns of Enfield, East Windsor, Windsor Locks, Suffield, Somers and Stafford. I come before this committee today to support Raised Bill 5497, in particular Sections 13 and 14 which allow for additional employment protections for victims of domestic violence.

It is my belief these additional benefits will help victims of domestic violence from becoming revictimized in the workplace. Many victims are already embarrassed to speak about their situation especially individuals who may be in high level positions. When their jobs become jeopardized it may be only then that they will be willing to come forward about the abuse they are experiencing. They should be protected by law, not penalized if they disclose the fact they

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139 Hazard Avenue Building 3 Enfield, CT. 06082

are a victim. Being a victim of domestic violence is more than the abuse. When a victim decides to leave or if her abuser has been arrested she must go to court, perhaps see a doctor for her injuries, receive counseling for her trauma, find a safe place to live if her home isn't any longer, uproot her children and change the routine of her life in general. All of these things will require her to lose time from her job. Her job may be the only stability in her life and by leaving the abuser it will become her sole income of support. It is known that economic independence is one of the strongest indicators of whether or not a victim can leave a batterer.

As a victim of domestic violence in the 80's and working in a manufacturing environment I was revictimized by the manager of the department I worked in. I would come in late or not come in at all because of the abuse I received the night before, too embarrassed to show my bruises in public. During this time my abuser was arrested and I once again needed to take time off to go to court. My abuser stalked me, and even with a restraining order which I carried with me at all times, he freely walked into my place of employment. But I didn't want to say anything because I was afraid of losing my job. All of this happened over a period of three years and when I finally decided to speak out to my manager about it during my review process he explained that my personal issues were not to be brought into my job and the expectations were that I fix it because my job was in jeopardy as a result of my attendance and lack of focus. At this time I was a Quality Control Supervisor of records. I was dependent on my job for it was the only source of income I had to support myself and keep my home. Even when my life returned to normal, that period of time marked me. I was pitied by the manager who thought me unstable and when it was time to downsize our facility I was one of the ones to go.

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As I stand before you today both as a survivor and executive director of a domestic violence agency I ask that you make Connecticut the 41<sup>st</sup> state to have legislative laws designed to give victims additional protection in the workplace. Don't let the workplace become another barrier for the victim – allow it to be a safe zone, sanctuary and a source of income so the victim can escape. Thank you.

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